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SUBJECT: TURKEY-PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN: "ANKARA PROCESS"
TRILATERAL DATES SLIP; ANKARA LOOKING AHEAD TO POST-DOSTUM
JUNBESH LEADERSHIP

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, reasons 1.4 b, d

"ANKARA PROCESS" TRILATERAL SUMMIT
NOW PLANNED FOR OCTOBER

¶1. (C) Ongoing political wrangling in Pakistan has caused the dates for the next Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral summit (the "Ankara Process") to slip once again, this time to October 2008, according to MFA South Asia Section Head Ilhan Sener. An U/S-level Joint Working Group (JWG) would thus be held in September, to prepare for the summit.

¶2. (C) Sener emphasized that it was Pakistani FM Qureshi who announced during Turkish FM Babacan's April 18-19 visit that a JWG meeting would take place in May 2008; Turkey recognizes Pakistan's political situation will need to sort itself out before such a summit can take place. In particular, by-elections are upcoming and new Foreign Secretary Bashir is still settling into his position. The Turks are eager, but not anxious, and are prepared to wait. Sener expressed some frustration with PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif who, he said, by pulling his party from the Cabinet, has cleverly managed to remain inside the democratically-elected government without having to take on any governing responsibility. PPP-leader Zardari, he opined, has been acting more responsibly. Sener told us the Turks would use the extra time to further develop the summit agenda.

THE LONG-VIEW ON DOSTUM: JUNBESH PARTY CONGRESS

¶3. (C) It is Turkey's "strong expectation" that Dostum will not stand for Junbesh party chairman at the June 15 party congress, according to Sener. The Turks have leaned on Dostum, reminding him they "saved him from the gallows." Turkey is not supporting any particular candidate for chairman, but Sener emphasized that it is only a chairman being elected at this stage, not leader. It will take time -- at least six months -- to cultivate the new chairman, develop him as a leader, and transition that role away from Dostum. Like him or not, Dostum is seen as a leader and "it is not easy to create one in Afghanistan," said Sener.

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